

Pinal County Corridors Definition Study

Summary Report No. 2 - Public Involvement Report, Round Two

ADOT Project No. T04-49-P0001 ADOT Purchase Order No. PGKG 2642

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY REPORT NO. 2 – PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT REPORT, ROUND TWO

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.]	BACKGROUND INFORMATION	1
_,		
3.]	NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS / COVERAGE	1
4	NOTIFICATION BY MAIL	_
4.]	NOTIFICATION DY WAIL	•• 4
5.	OPEN HOUSES	2
5. 1		
5.2		2
	5.2.1 August 22, 2005, City of Apache Junction	
	5.2.2 August 23, 2005, Town of Queen Creek	5
	5.2.3 August 29, 2005, Town of Gilbert	<i>6</i>
	5.2.4 August 30, 2005, Town of Florence	7
6.]	PUBLIC COMMENTS	9
6 1	Written Comments Submitted at Open Houses	c
	2 Other Comments Received (via email)	
APP	ENDIX A – OPEN HOUSE NOTICE (NEWSPAPER AND MAILER)	13
APP	ENDIX B – NEWSPAPER ARTICLES	14
В.	1 Freeway may be built in Mesa	14
В.		
В.		
В.	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
В.		
В.	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
	commendation	
В.		
В.		
В.	* *	
В.	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
	11 Pinal fears future gridlock, County, East Valley leaders find freeway study lacking	
В.		
D.		•
В.	13 Studies indicate need for 2 new Pinal roads, State urged to move quickly to me	eet
	plosion of growthplosion of growth	
В.	14 Debate over Pinal County's growth rate hinders plans	28
APPI	ENDIX C – PRESENTATION MATERIALS	30
		•-
APPl	ENDIX D – SAMPLE COMMENT CARD	39





TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY REPORT NO. 2 – PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT REPORT, ROUND TWO

APPENDIX E – CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED40
LIST OF FIGURES
Figure 5-1 – Photograph taken at Town of Gilbert Open House
LIST OF TABLES
Table 5-1 – ADOT Definiton Studies Open House Attendance
Table 5-4 – Questions, Comments and Responses from Gilbert Open House Question and Answer Session





1. Introduction

The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) hosted two rounds of public involvement open houses for the *Pinal County Corridors Definition Study*, the *Williams Gateway Corridor Definition Study*, and the US 60 Corridor Definition Study.

The first round of open houses was held in April 2005¹. The second round of open houses was held in August 2005. The purpose of this report is to document the activities, information presented at, and input received during the second round of open houses that was held in August 2005.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The second round of open houses for the US 60 Corridor Definition Study, the Pinal County Corridors Definition Study, and the Williams Gateway Corridor Definition Study were held jointly at the following locations:

- § City of Apache Junction August 22, 2005
- § Town of Queen Creek August 23, 2005
- § Town of Gilbert August 29, 2005
- § Town of Florence August 30, 2005

The primary purpose of the open houses was to present the findings of the corridor needs analysis, preliminary feasibility analysis, and to receive public input regarding the studies.

3. Newspaper Advertisements / Coverage

Newspaper advertisements were placed in the following newspapers to notify the public of the Open Houses:

- § San Tan News (August 6-19 Edition, 2005)
- § Casa Grande Dispatch (August 9, 2005)
- § Coolidge Examiner (August 10, 2005)
- § Florence Reminder (August 11, 2005)
- § The East Valley Tribune (August 8, 2005)
- § Apache Junction News (August 8-14 Edition, 2005)
- § Sun Lakes/Chandler Independent (August 10, 2005)

The advertisements ran in the above-listed newspapers in early August, approximately two weeks prior to the open houses. In keeping with Title VI of the United States Civil Rights Act of 1964 requirements, open house advertisements provided an opportunity for persons with disabilities to request accommodations prior to the meetings. **Appendix A** contains a sample of the newspaper open house advertisement.

Newspaper coverage of the study, and the open houses in particular, was substantial both prior to and after the open houses. Several of the newspaper articles that appeared in local newspapers are provided in **Appendix B**.

¹ Summary Report No. 1: Public Involvement Round One, available online at, http://tpd.azdot.gov/planning/corridorstudies.php.





4. NOTIFICATION BY MAIL

An open house notification flyer was either electronically emailed or sent by the US Postal Service to the names on the project's mailing list. This mailing list has been continually updated since the beginning of the project, and has approximately 1,000 entries. The open house notification fliers were mailed on August 10, 2005, approximately two weeks prior to the second round of open houses. The flyer is the same as the newspaper advertisement provided in **Appendix A**.

5. OPEN HOUSES

ADOT Transportation Planning staff, ADOT Communication and Community Partnerships staff, members of the Technical Advisory Committees (TAC), the consultant teams, and local government officials were present at each open house to answer questions and to interact with the public. **Table 5-1** lists the locations and estimated attendance at each of the open houses.

Table 5-1 – ADOT Definiton Studies Open House Attendance

Open House Location / Date	Number of Attendees
Apache Junction Town Hall / August 22, 2005	83
Queen Creek Town Hall / August 23, 2005	57
Town of Gilbert Southeast Regional Library / August 29, 2005	52
Florence Town Hall/ August 30, 2005	65
Total Open House Attendance	257

Each of the open houses followed a similar format – a presentation was made by ADOT staff followed by a public question and answer session. The remainder of the meeting followed an open format where attendees could view the project displays and speak one-on-one with project team members.

5.1 ADOT Presentation

Appendix C contains samples of materials that were distributed at each open house. The PowerPoint presentation that was made at each of the four open houses is also provided in **Appendix C**.

5.2 Summary of Open House Questions and Answers

A question and answer period was held at each open house location. This section contains a summary of verbal questions and comments received at each open house. Written comments that were submitted are not summarized in this section but are summarized in section 6.

5.2.1 August 22, 2005, City of Apache Junction

The first open house was held on August 22, 2005 at the City of Apache Junction Council Chambers from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. 83 people listed their names on the sign-in sheets.





Table 5-2 summarizes verbal comments, questions, and input received during the question and answer session at the Apache Junction open house.

Table 5-2 – Questions, Comments, and Responses from Apache Junction Open House Question and Answer Session

Question/Comment	Response
State Representative Pete Rios thanked ADOT for taking the initiative to study these corridors. He expressed disappointment in the finding that there will not be enough development to recommend all of the study corridors. His concerns, however, relate to those individuals that live off of the US 60 east of SR-79. They fear that constructing the freeway on the parallel route will delay the freeway by several years because of the numerous studies that will be required. Environmental studies could take several years to complete. He wonders if a comparison has been done between the bypass and what it would cost to extend the freeway on the current US 60 alignment. He also wondered what are the primary reasons for the bypass – is the current route too congested?	The US 60 reroute recommendation generally parallels the current US 60 corridor. The reroute would connect to the US 60 at Renaissance Festival site and then would continue on the existing alignment as a 4-lane divided roadway. This will cost approximately 70 to 80 million dollars including the interchanges.
Sandie Smith, Pinal County Board of Supervisors, asked if construction costs would be similar for the existing alignment and the parallel alignment if right-of-way were obtained. She asked if the study has considered the number of businesses that would have to be condemned if the existing US 60 alignment is utilized. She stated that the existing US 60 that is parallel to the reroute could be transferred to Pinal County.	A precise cost comparison was not conducted because right-of-way costs are unknown. However, one of the major reasons for recommending a reroute of US 60 is because of impacts to the existing businesses.
Sandie Smith stated that the vast majority of land on which a parallel route would cross is state land. She said that we do have the ability to transfer this cost to developers and owners.	Partnerships with the private sector will be important.
ADOT is being extremely short sighted if ADOT does not adopt all of the study corridors. Decisions must be looked at from a generational perspective. One of the major considerations should be connectivity. Connectivity is not being addressed by these corridors. The Price Freeway, from Tempe to Chandler, was initially proposed as an expressway. Mayor Brooks fought like crazy to upgrade it to a freeway.	ADOT has closely examined the study corridors, and has examined the SEMNPTS study throughout this study. Dianne stated that ADOT feels that the recommendations being proposed are supported by the technical analysis.
It seems odd that the San Tan is not being connected to SR-79.	
What is the source of population projections numbers?	The Central Arizona College Bond Feasibility Study serves as the primary source of information for population projections. These numbers represent an extremely rapid rate of growth – even faster than is seen in Maricopa County. The use of these numbers was recommended by Pinal County and approved by the TAC.
How will construction phasing be taken into account? A long north-south corridor will take many years to develop. An east west connection to Florence Junction could be completed much more quickly.	Route connectivity is achieved in the proposed corridors. In addition, the Pinal County SATS will address arterial connectivity to the corridor.





Table 5-2 – Questions, Comments and Responses from Apache Junction Open House Question and Answer Session (continued)

Question/Comment	Response
The Williams Gateway corridor should be constructed all the way to the US 60, rather than the US 60 reroute.	
Why is there not an east-west connection to Florence Junction?	Population projections and associated travel demand do not forecast the need for a freeway corridor all the way to Florence Junction. This however, is contingent upon the development of state lands. Roads will be needed. They will be built as the land is developed. These roads will provide connectivity to Florence Junction.
Will common citizens have an opportunity to provide input to the plan?	All of the studies have a public participation component.





5.2.2 August 23, 2005, Town of Queen Creek

The second open house was held on Tuesday, August 23, 2005 in the Town of Queen Creek. The open house was held at the Town Hall, located at 22350 South Ellsworth Road. 57 attendees listed their names on the sign-in sheet.

Table 5-3 summarizes verbal comments, questions, and input received during the question and answer session at the Queen Creek open house.

Table 5-3 – Questions, Comments and Responses from Queen Creek Open House Question and Answer Session

Question/Comment	Response
With a majority of the freeways proposed to be constructed on State Land, does ADOT have to purchase land from the Arizona State Land Department?	Yes, it has to be purchased at market value.
You are calling these 'preliminary recommendations.' What is the guarantee that these are the recommendations that will be presented to the Board?	The recommendations are preliminary because public and stakeholder input are important before final recommendations can be made. ADOT stands behind the study and the preliminary recommendations.
Have any recommendations been made to local governments relating to what they can do to solve local traffic congestion?	ADOT will be providing funding for Small Area Transportation Studies.
While ADOT continues to study the freeways, right-of-way continues to disappear.	Land prices do rise. Solving transportation issues is a partnership. Studies have to be performed, including environmental impact studies. Jurisdictions recognize that the State cannot build all of the roads that are needed.
Has a timeline been developed for construction?	Timelines and schedules will be determined by the State Transportation Board.
How much money is provided by Proposition 400 for these corridors?	Proposition 400 does not provide any funding for new corridors in Pinal County. It is essential that local jurisdictions develop the local arterial system.
Considering the development explosion over the past 3 to 5 years, how is it that an east/west corridor is not needed?	One of the things observed from the model is that the traffic is pulled off of the north-south corridors. However, even with a new north-south corridor there is still congestion. Local jurisdictions need to do their part to widen arterials. Twenty years ago when the Loop 202 was planned, the arterial system did not exist. The grid system was developed before the Loop 202 was constructed. The population forecasts have assumed aggressive growth – and the timing of that growth is very aggressive.
How final is the Frye Road alignment to the Williams Gateway Study?	MAG has adopted Frye Road as the preferred alignment, with the caveat that the Ryan Road alignment will be reviewed in the Design-Concept Report.





5.2.3 August 29, 2005, Town of Gilbert

The third open house was held at the Town of Gilbert on August 20, 2005. The open house was held at the Southeast Regional Library located at 775 N. Greenfield Road. 52 individuals listed their names on the sign-in sheet.

Table 5-4 summarizes verbal comments, questions, and input received during the question and answer session at the Gilbert open house. A photograph taken at this open house is displayed in **Figure 5-1**.

Table 5-4 – Questions, Comments and Responses from Gilbert Open House Question and Answer Session

Question/Comment	Response
Roc Arnett, President of the East Valley Partnership, stated that he does not dispute demographic and population projections as they are reasonably accurate. He stated, however, that this study needs to take a longer-term view, and that perhaps the year 2050 would be a more suitable time horizon. He provided several points supporting this position:	Mr. Arnett's comments will be recorded as input to the studies.
 Wilbur Smith recommended the MAG Freeway system decades before construction actually began. ADOT will not complete the initial recommendations from the program for two more years. 	
- Population projections from the Morrison Institute show that 750,000 to 900,000 people will live in the area by the year 2050.	
The study area is roughly equivalent to the size of Tempe, Mesa, Chandler, and Queen Creek combined. This equivalent area currently contains nearly 800,000 residents and contains three freeways – the ADOT recommendations are for only two freeways in the study area.	
 Pinal County records show that there are currently 500,000 dwelling units that have been planned, but not yet constructed. 	
 Williams Gateway area is planned to be the state's 3rd largest employment center. 	
 If all of the corridors are not recommended, the ability of the region to work together to leverage all of the resources available from developers and local jurisdictions will be inhibited. 	
The value of State Trust Land would be increased by recommending all of the corridors.	
All of the corridors should be recommended.	These comments will be recorded.
Does the travel demand model account for all of the people who would use the north-south corridor to connect to I-10 and Tucson?	Yes.
What is the down-side to recommending three corridors instead of two corridors? The third corridor (Williams Gateway to Florence Junction) is needed as a safety valve to connect the two freeways.	The recommended corridors are based on the results of travel demand modeling to meet 2030 needs.
The north-south corridor is a long freeway. Why can't the shorter Williams Gateway segment be included? As the north-south corridor will take many years to construct, the north-south corridor could 'dead-end' for many years.	
Will the US 60 reroute be able to handle the traffic in that area?	The reroute facility will improve mobility in the Gold Canyon area.





Figure 5-1 – Photograph taken at Town of Gilbert Open House



5.2.4 August 30, 2005, Town of Florence

The last open house for the Corridor Definition Studies was held in the Town of Florence on August 30, 2005. The meeting was held at the Town of Florence Town Hall located at 755 North Main Street in Florence. 65 individual listed their names on the sign-in sheet.

Table 5-5 summarizes verbal comments, questions, and input received during the question and answer session at the Florence open house. A photograph taken at the Florence Open House is displayed in **Figure 5-2**.





Table 5-5 – Questions, Comments and Responses from Florence House Question and Answer Session

Question/Comment	Response
How will ADOT will protect right-of-way? Right-of-way cannot be protected unless it is purchased. People will build on the right-of-way, and the ability of the agency to purchase the right-of-way will diminish.	Local zoning authorities can protect right-of-way though their permitting and zoning process. Small Area Studies, such as those that will be performed for Queen Creek, Florence, Coolidge, and Pinal County will assist local agencies in identifying where right-of-way should be protected for county roads and arterial facilities.
One of the PowerPoint slides states that multi-modal transportation is one of the solutions. Does that include railway? Does it include looking at mass transportation?	Mass transit is addressed at a very general level.
Mayor Keno Hawker, City of Mesa, stated that the population projections used in the travel demand model are low. MAG has slightly different numbers. The Morrison Institute shows a build-out of 900,000 people. If the study area is superimposed over the Mesa area, build-out would show nearly 750,000 people. There exists the opportunity now to plan both freeways and land use simultaneously.	Mr. Hawker's comments will be recorded as input to the study.
The Atlanta region is a good comparison to the Phoenix region. Initially, toll roads were proposed and people laughed. However, toll roads in Atlanta have worked remarkably well. Financing the freeways through toll roads has allowed them to escalate freeway construction by 10 to 15 years. The opportunity is right now. In the year 2020 ADOT won't be able to afford the right-of-way. Is there a possibility of accelerating the freeway development process so that we being proactive rather than reactive?	These studies will include a general analysis of toll road feasibility. Any further steps will be determined by the State Transportation Board.
What is ADOT doing with the comments and concerns expressed at this meeting?	All comments received are recorded and will be included in the Public Involvement Report.
These studies should include more multimodal opportunities.	Upcoming Small Area Transportation Studies will consider multimodal opportunities within the study area. These include bus lanes, HOV lanes, bus queue lanes, etc.
What is the extent of coordination and cooperation with the Arizona State Land Department?	Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) is a member of the Technical Advisory Committee. ADOT is coordinating extensively with the ASLD. ASLD does support the Williams Gateway freeway which passes through their property.
Could ADOT work with the ASLD? By developing the corridors, the value of ASLD property would be enhanced over time. Why is there not a way that ASLD can set aside the State Trust Land and advance the freeways?	ADOT will continue to work closely with ASLD.
Where did the population numbers come from? Have we checked with developers, etc. to get the numbers correct?	Information was obtained from MAG, the Bond Feasibility Study, and Pinal County. Population projections from these sources are within 2% to 5 % of our population projections.





Figure 5-2 – Photograph taken at Town of Florence Open House



6. Public Comments

Public comment forms were available to the public at each open house. **Appendix D** contains a sample public comment card. The public could also comment by email or regular postal mail. The following sections contain written comments that were submitted at each of the open houses.

6.1 Written Comments Submitted at Open Houses

- § I support the Williams Gateway being placed along Ryan Rd. versus Frye Road. Ryan Road will benefit the Town of Queen Creek versus Mesa. Queen Creek is in need of a freeway in the southern portion versus the northern portion of the county and town.
- § We must establish all 4 of the corridors identified in the MAG and CAG Studies. These corridors must be considered in a generational atmosphere, as it is very difficult to see 25 to 40 years in the future. History has taught us we have been very shortsighted in establishing our transportation corridors.
- § Do you really welcome comments from the citizens? Talking with your reps tonight, they were "selling" us on "their" ideas rather than listening to us!! The "band-aid" bypass for US 60 at Gold Canyon is a joke! From Florence Junction to Apache Junction US 60 is a neighborhood road. Fast moving semi-trucks have no business traveling our neighborhood road on their way to deliver their loads to the Valley or to Williams Gateway Airport.
- § The smartest statement you have written is "US 60 Corridor Study (from the end of Superstition Freeway to Florence Junction)." Eliminate your "bypass" around Gold Canyon and realize Williams Gateway Freeway to Florence Junction is the bypass.
- § As a resident of Queen Creek and a life long resident of Arizona, I strongly support the current ADOT recommendation. The fact was stated that most Pinal and southern Maricopa





- County traffic wants to move north not west. I agree with this assessment and agree with the plan for the N/S corridor. Thank you for listening to the concerns of the residents in the community and pleas don't let the pressure from outside entities persuade or change the planned recommendations.
- § We are very supportive of ADOT's findings concerning the Pinal County Corridor Study. We appreciate that ADOT listened to the concerns of residents who opposed a corridor along Hunt Highway. We are excited to see a North/South corridor planned and happy the findings did not support a Hunt expansion.
- As a resident of Chandler Heights, I wish to thank Dianne Kresich and her team for listening to the voices of Chandler Heights in our opposition of Hunt Highway as part of the corridor study. I am in support of the findings of the study and the study team seems to have projected into the population of 2030. The development of Anthem in the NE is what will need attention as well as the growth in Pinal County. Dianne's team did good and thank you again for listening to the citizens.
- § There needs to be a "major freeway" connecting the 202 to Florence Junction (SR 79) traffic, without stopping, can go both east and west, north and south, and "thru" Phoenix and Valley cities.
- § Population is not going to wait until 2030 to increase. We must get freeways in place now as the population for Pinal County is exploding every day. We must be ready for this growth.
- § We agree with the preliminary ADOT Corridor recommendations at the August 23, 2005 meeting. We do not and will not support any expansion of Hunt Highway east to west. There will be strong opposition to any attempt by the developers, greedy business interest to persuade ADOT to expand Hunt Highway east to west.
- § Projected population of Pinal County is low for year 2030. Flexibility in relocation or more so timing of construction should be flexible enough to allow first come first served will be handle by freeway build-out GET THE RIGHT-OF-WAY NOW when timing is right. Let state land allocate acreage for freeway right-of-way.
- § Good meeting Glad to see community involvement.
- § Please keep freeways off Attaway Road between Hunt Highway and the Gila River.
- § I feel that connecting this new freeway to Highway 79 would be a waste. Very few people (in comparison to other roadways) travel Highway 79. It would make better use of the freeway to connect it near Coolidge and Eloy and they have a parkway or something that connects to Florence. Plus there is more growth in the Coolidge and Eloy area as opposed to Florence. Additionally, there are many people from Coolidge and Eloy that work in Florence and a freeway would get them there faster.
- § Very thorough use of maps and exhibits to clearly show alternatives, environmental impacts, land ownership.
- § Need to get from Apache Junction to Eloy.

6.2 Other Comments Received (via email)

§ Thank you for your courtesy last evening when you requested Public Comment in Gilbert. For your convenience, I will restate the comments I made in Gilbert in this email. As you know, East Valley Partnership has not quarreled with the projected numbers of the Cambridge study, except to state our opinion that they did not go far enough. We believe that because of the growth of the region and the demographer projections, it is essential that ADOT take a longer-term view during this planning and corridor definition process. It will be a gross injustice to the future inhabitants of the Northern Pinal County Area if a 40- to 50-year horizon is not considered. In support of this position, I remind you that the Valley's





Freeway Plan was first proposed by Wilbur-Smith in 1962. Here we are, 43 to 45 years later, and we still have two years to go before the system will be completed. A recommendation of fewer future corridors seems to be inappropriate when weighed against the facts. The corridors recommended by the SEMNPTS should be designated state corridors to give future generations needed transportation infrastructure. Please consider these additional points:

- i. The Morrison Institute research being done on the Superstition Vistas Area, the 275 square miles of State Trust Land, will indicates this area could be home to between 750,000 to 900,000 people by the year 2050.
- ii. The 275 square miles of the State Trust Land has an amazing similarity to 277 square miles of land that is now occupied by Mesa, Gilbert, Chandler and Queen Creek. Using the current population of those four cities of some 800,000 to 850,000 residents, it is not difficult to envision the growth that could very well take place in the Superstition Vista with similar growth patterns. In the Mesa, Gilbert, Chandler and Queen Creek area, there are now three freeways and soon to be a forth as compared to the corridor study where only one freeway is being recommended and a shortened bypass around Gold Canyon. We believe that the need will be much closer to that recommended by the previous study not the latter.
- iii. The current active and planned development in the map area (hand delivered) of Pinal County shows 600,000 dwelling units. Of those, at least 500,000 remain to be built. At only 2 persons per household, the developments would result in 1.2 million additional people. Florence alone has approved development of 71,000 home sites which translates to some 175,000 residences by their projection.
- iv. The Williams Gateway Area is being planned to accommodate 100,000 jobs, which will no doubt become the third largest employment center in the state. With the development of the Williams Gateway Airport, ASU Poly, and Chandler-Gilbert Community College, this area will generate travel trips from workers, visitors, and students from all directions. One freeway does not seem adequate to carry the anticipated traffic.
- v. By designating the full set of corridors as future State Highways, we will allow maximum leverage for the large estimated cost to construct these corridors. It is going to require a collaborated effort to get these corridors built in the next 40 years. The process will require the combined effort of local, regional, county, state and federal entities as well as private sector partners to accomplish. Without these critical designations, the area residences and communities will be set back in their progress 10 to 15 years -- clearly a disservice to the area.
- vi. We believe the State Land Department will be willing to cooperate with the establishment of these future corridors to be purchased in the future. It will do nothing but add value for the beneficiaries of the Land Trust. Please accept these comments on the record. If you have any questions or require clarification, I would be pleased to discuss further in person or over e-mail.
- § Just my thoughts on Hunt Hwy expansion. It needs it badly but with thought to community safety in place. There now about 12 communities along the corridor and more planned. ADOT needs to take that into account when planning expansion to Hunt Hwy.]
- § To whom it may concern:

I am a resident of the San Tan Heights Community at Gary and Hunt Highway. I have recently learned about the study being conducted on Hunt Highway regarding current and future traffic concerns. Traffic to me is one of my major concerns, I live in Pinal County, however, I work in Maricopa (downtown Phoenix, the central of Maricopa County), every day I drive 1 hour to work and 1 hour home. Many of my days I am trying to decide whether Riggs is going to have more traffic then Ellsworth, and do I want to deal with the bottle necking at US-60 and Val-Vista. I believe that we start addressing our traffic concerns before





you make it to Hunt Highway, for my daily trip that is the least of my concerns. I believe that expanding the North-South entrances to our community (Pinal County/Hunt Highway) would dramatically lighten traffic on Hunt Highway. I have friends and family that live further down the corridor, Johnson Ranch and Copper Basin, with the expansion of Ironwood, these relatives would not travel down Ellsworth to Hunt Highway, they would take Ironwood all the way up. As for me, if Riggs were to be expanded, I would travel straight to the I-10 and be on my merry way. Thanks for your time.





APPENDIX A – OPEN HOUSE NOTICE (NEWSPAPER AND MAILER)



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

· M

OPEN HOUSES

Monday August 22, 2005

APACHE JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
300 E. Superstition Blvd.
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm
6 pm Presentation

Monday August 29, 2005
TOWN OF GILBERT
Southeast Regional Library
775 N. Greenfield Road
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm
6 pm Presentation

Tuesday August 23, 2005
QUEEN CREEK TOWN HALL
22350 S. Ellsworth Rd.
Multipurpose Room
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm
6 pm Presentation

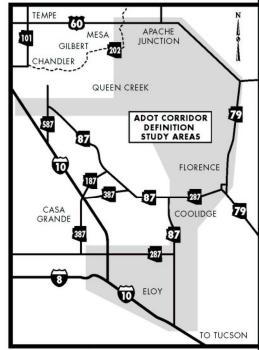
Tuesday August 30, 2005
FLORENCE TOWN HALL
755 N. Main
Multipurpose Room
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm
6 pm Presentation

ADOT is currently conducting three Corridor Definition Studies:

Pinal County Corridors Definition Study
U.S. 60 Corridor Definition Study
Williams Gateway Corridor Definition Study.

The purpose of these studies is to determine the need for and feasibility of potential new corridors in the depicted study area. Four open houses will be held to update the public on the progress of the studies, answer questions and gather input from the public. ADOT staff will present information on all three studies at each of the open houses. Please stop by one of the open houses listed above to learn more about the studies.

Persons with a disability may request accommodation, such as a sign language interpreter, by contacting Carol Oaks at 110 S. Church Avenue, Ste. 3350, Tucson, AZ 85701, telephone: (520) 885-9009, or fax: (520) 885-0311. Requests should be made as early as possible to allow time to arrange accommodation. This document is also available in alternative formats by contacting Carol Oaks.



For more information, visit our webpage at http://tpd.azdot.gov/planning/corridorstudies.php





APPENDIX B – NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

B.1 Freeway may be built in Mesa

By Jenni Ottum, Independent Newspapers June 27, 2005

It could be a long road ahead before traffic problems are resolved in Queen Creek and northwestern Pinal County communities.

Project consultants for the Maricopa Association of Governments have recommended that the future Williams Gateway Freeway be built in Mesa, along the Frye Road corridor.

The \$325 million freeway will curve east from the Santan Freeway to Meridian Road. Although Mesa has been planning for the freeway route for more than five years, Queen Creek officials were vying for a corridor alternative that would extend into the town's boundaries and help alleviate traffic problems in the Southeast Valley.

The recommendation is "quite significant from a couple of standpoints," said John Kross, Queen Creek's assistant town manager. "The freeway could provide a direct transportation route to existing and future population centers. It also could mean a huge boost to economic development in Queen Creek." Residents living in the San Tan area in northwestern Pinal County funnel into Queen Creek to travel north to the U.S. 60, Mr. Kross said. More than 500,000 people are expected to live between Queen Creek and Pinal County by 2015, he added.

Mesa officials anticipate that more than 1 million people will live on land just east of the city and south of Apache Junction in the future, said Jeff Kramer, Mesa's director of transportation. But that could be 15 years away, Mr. Kross said.

About 6,000 people live on the 275 square miles of state trust land east of Mesa. Many questions have yet to be answered regarding the future development of state trust land, Mr. Kross said. Additionally, the recommendation submitted to MAG puts a damper on plans to build the Queen Creek Employment Corridor, which would be constructed near the Williams Gateway Airport just south of the town's northern boundary.

"The corridor is extremely important for economic development," Mr. Kross said. "It would be difficult to attract major employers and industries without having freeway access in Queen Creek." Mesa officials are pleased with the Williams Gateway Freeway corridor recommendation, which was submitted by the Phoenix-based consultant company DMJM+Harris Inc.

"We had originally envisioned the freeway alignment to be Galveston Road - about one mile north of the Frye Road alignment," Mr. Kramer said. "That's what is shown in our General Plan." But the Galveston Road corridor alternative would have required that the GM Proving Grounds in Mesa be relocated.

"This wasn't really a viable option," Mr. Kramer said.





However, the new freeway alignment location will help develop a major economic area near Williams Gateway Airport, he said.

"One of our biggest concerns is residential encroachment next to the airport," Mr. Kramer said. "We all want to see Williams Gateway Airport expand, and the freeway serves as a really good planning device."

Mr. Kramer said that the freeway will attract new businesses into southeast Mesa.

"The freeway will force (residential) encroachment to stay farther northeast and away from flight paths."

Mesa officials understand that the Queen Creek area is experiencing an explosion in population. But the city has been planning for the freeway corridor since before 2000, Mr. Kramer said.

"ADOT is conducting a comparison study that looks at extending routes out to Pinal County," he said. "Eventually, the Williams Gateway Freeway could be extended 10 miles east to the U.S. 60 or State Route 179."

City officials are also working with Queen Creek officials to improve northbound thoroughfares, which connect with the U.S. 60 in Mesa.

"We are looking at some things we could do to improve our own streets, and help move traffic from the Queen Creek area more efficiently," Mr. Kramer said.

The Williams Gateway Freeway route recommendation is not final. A series of MAG committees must review the recommendation before it is submitted to the MAG Regional Council comprised of mayors from throughout the Valley for final approval.

The regional council will vote July 27 on the final alignment for the freeway, which is scheduled for construction in 2016.

Queen Creek will continue to state its concern regarding the recommended freeway route, Mr. Kross said.

Post your comment on this issue at newsblog.info/0178. News Editor Jenni Ottum can be reached at (480) 497-0048 or at jottum@newszap.com.

B.2 Pinal road plan backs 2 freeways, Study also calls for regional parkway

By Garin Groff Tribune July 19, 2005

Burgeoning Pinal County needs two new freeways and a parkway to ease its growing congestion problems, a study of the area's transportation issues has found.

At the same time, the study found traffic patterns won't justify a regional highway along Hunt Highway. Residents along that road had opposed a freeway in the largely rural area.

The study's findings are mostly in sync with the predominant calls for and against various new roads in the area.





"In both cases, this plan will be met with satisfaction," said Dianne Kresich, a regional planner at the Arizona Department of Transportation. "We've been hearing very positive reactions so far."

The plan is still preliminary and will take nearly the rest of the year to complete. Those working on it have just crunched data to find where demand warrants major improvements that need state funding and where lighter traffic flows need only local roads that local governments will build themselves.

Congestion is already unacceptable on U.S. 60 east of Apache Junction, the study found. It calls for extending the freeway through Gold Canyon. The freeway would go west of the existing 4-lane highway to give the area two major roads.

Another freeway would run north-south from Coolidge and Florence to the future Williams Gateway Freeway. From there, it would continue north as a parkway until it reaches U.S. 60.

Planners considered a major road along Hunt Highway to ease delays that already frustrate drivers in Queen Creek. But a highway or freeway wouldn't help the problem, Kresich said. Traffic patterns demand a north south freeway that will connect to the Williams Gateway Freeway, which drivers can use to reach the Santan Free way stretch of Loop 202.

But that won't solve all Queen Creek's issues. That town lacks a mature network of arterial roads, as do south Chandler and Gilbert. ADOT will work with Queen Creek to plan improvements Kresich said.

Pinal County Supervisor Sandie Smith, D-District 2 of Gold Canyon, said residents along Hunt Highway will rejoice that the plan doesn't call for a freeway there.

"I don't think anybody was enthused about it," she said. "A lot of people were up in arms with it coming along their portion of Pinal County."

Residents can get their first glimpse of the emerging plan Thursday at a meeting of the Chandler Transportation Commission. ADOT will hear public comment later this summer as it works to finish the plan by November, when the State Transportation Board will consider adopting it.

Learn more

What: ADOT report on a Pinal County Corridor Definition Study, at a meeting of the Chandler

Transportation Commission When: 7 p.m. Thursday

Where: Chandler City Council chambers in the Chandler Library, 22. S. Delaware St.

B.3 ADOT sketching more EV freeways

Mike Walbert The Arizona Republic Jul. 21, 2005 12:00 AM

Arizona Department of Transportation officials say they are taking broad brush strokes to determine whether major road corridors, including freeways, would sooth growing congestion that may cripple travel in northern Pinal and southeastern Maricopa counties 25 years from now.

After evaluating population, employment and travel demands, ADOT is looking at the possibility of two new freeways and a parkway to improve traffic movement in problem areas such as Queen Creek and Coolidge, according to new ADOT study findings.





ADOT planners also are recommending that a freeway not be built along Hunt Highway, an option that initially incensed a vocal group of county-island residents in Gilbert and Queen Creek.

The findings will be presented before the Chandler Transportation Commission at 7 tonight in Chandler City Council chambers, 22 S. Delaware St. The public is invited to attend.

ADOT is stressing that any corridors identified are very preliminary locations and must undergo wideranging evaluations before they can be classified as freeways.

"If you picture this, picture a wide and vague squiggle," said Dianne Kresich, ADOT regional planner.

The study reveals that a rerouting of U.S. 60 near Gold Canyon and a north-south freeway stretching from Williams Gateway Freeway to near Coolidge and Florence would address traffic needs. A parkway would then extend north from Williams Gateway Freeway to U.S. 60.

Kresich said the study is nearly complete and ADOT is scheduled to bring recommendations, including type of road and general location, to the State Transportation Board in November. The board holds final approval over what roads are added to the state transportation system, but officials said any construction remains several years off.

Members of the Chandler Heights Community Organization, made up of county-island residents north of Hunt Highway, decried any plans to build a six-lane road or freeway near Hunt Highway when ADOT held public meetings this spring.

"I think that is probably the best long-term decision (ADOT) could have ever made," said Melissa Apergis, a member of the Chandler Heights organization.

ADOT's Doug Nintzel said four public meetings are scheduled for next month.

B.4 Loop 202 changing traffic in Chandler, State won't expand Hunt Highway

By Chris Markham Tribune July 22, 2005

The newest section of the Santan Freeway stretch of Loop 202 to Arizona Avenue has already drastically changed traffic patterns in Chandler, city officials said Thursday. Until the new section opened in June, drivers commuting from south Chandler were stuck with surface streets such as Queen Creek Road, to get to Loop 101. "Now they're going north to the Santan" said Brian Scifers, Chandler's signal systems engineer. Specific traffic counts are not yet available. The next section, which will connect to Gilbert Road, is scheduled to open in October. The entire Loop 202 is supposed to be completed in two years.

The Arizona Department of Transportation also is studying future freeway needs in the area. A study of the Pinal County Corridor has found traffic patterns along Hunt Highway do not justify a regional highway along that route. Hunt Highway, while not actually a state highway, runs along Chandler's southern border. ADOT's finding against a regional highway is welcome news to many residents in that area, some who attended a Chandler traffic commission meeting Thursday. Bonnie Almaraz lives in the 1,600 –home Cooper Commons' subdivision, which borders the highway and the Gila River Indian Community. Alamaraz said she's concerned about the noise and traffic that would come with a





regional highway and fears such an amenity would make the reservation land across from her neighborhood an attractive spot for a casino. "I've lived there for four years and I've always heard talk about a casino," she said.

B.5 No Hunt freeway in plans

Mike Walbert The Arizona Republic Jul. 23, 2005 12:00 AM

The Arizona Department of Transportation reports that a freeway near Hunt Highway's corridor would not improve regional traffic flow, especially in congested areas such as Queen Creek, southeast Gilbert and southeast Chandler.

The finding, included in ADOT's Pinal County Corridors Definition Study, provides a sense of relief for many residents who live along the rural corridor and have expressed worries about a potential freeway damaging quality of life.

"We're happy there won't be a freeway," Bonnie Almaraz said of her fellow neighbors in Chandler's Cooper Commons subdivision. The neighborhood is right along Hunt Highway. advertisement

ADOT has been studying the potential for freeways in areas near Hunt Highway, Apache Junction, Coolidge, Eloy and Florence and presented its latest findings to the Chandler Transportation Commission on Thursday night.

"(Hunt Highway is) not a major arterial by any stretch," said Commissioner Frank Peake, who lives about a quarter-mile from Hunt Highway. Without a freeway, the burden of solving traffic congestion falls upon Queen Creek, Gilbert and Chandler to continue improvements on their street systems, said Dianne Kresich, ADOT regional planner.

Queen Creek met ADOT's findings with acceptance.

"We've always communicated that (Hunt Highway would) be the wrong location for a freeway," said John Kross, Queen Creek assistant town manager.

B.6 Williams Gateway Freeway plan favors Mesa, Queen Creek voices growth concerns over recommendation

Mike Walbert The Arizona Republic Jul. 23, 2005 12:00 AM

It's a question that affects homes, industry and the patience of area drivers: Where to build a freeway?

Regional transportation planners have moved one step closer to an answer for the Williams Gateway Freeway - a \$325 million freeway swooping east from the Santan Freeway to Meridian Road - and it lies in Mesa.

Project consultants for the Maricopa Association of Governments have recommended the Williams Gateway Freeway be built near Frye Road in Mesa.





The route was chosen over another potential alignment that stretches into neighboring Queen Creek's boundaries.

The recommendation is welcome news to Mesa, which has planned for the freeway for more than five years.

But Queen Creek officials are concerned development will be hindered by building the freeway more than a mile north of town limits, away from the town's growth.

The recommendation, submitted by Phoenix-based DMJM+Harris Inc., is far from a final decision.

It must pass by a series of MAG committees before arriving at the MAG Regional Council, a planning body made up of Valley mayors.

The regional council will vote July 27 on the freeway's final alignment, which is scheduled for construction around 2016.

"It was our hope that the farther south a freeway leg would go, the more accessible it'd be to population centers that are on the horizon 15 years from now," said John Kross, Queen Creek assistant town manager.

Queen Creek also was banking on the freeway stoking growth of employment centers.

Land surrounding Williams Gateway Airport is expected to flourish with employment and business in the coming decades resulting from the airport and Arizona State University East.

Kross said many questions remain regarding future development of state trust land that the freeway would eventually slice into.

Town officials estimate 500,000 people will live between Queen Creek and Pinal County by 2015 vs. "maybe 6,000 people" on the 275 square miles of state lands, Kross said.

Jeff Kramer, Mesa's transportation director, said the city has held discussions with Queen Creek about improving streets in south Mesa to alleviate some traffic near north Queen Creek.

Pockets of growth in Pinal County, especially the San Tan/Johnson Ranch area, have placed stress on Queen Creek's road system.

Motorists from Pinal County cut northwesterly through town to gain access to U.S. 60 to the north, creating congestion on roads that struggle to accommodate heavy traffic volumes.

Kramer said there also have been discussions with the Arizona Department of Transportation to extend the Williams Gateway Freeway one mile east to Ironwood Drive, which will be widened in the future, instead of ending at Meridian Road, which now doesn't exist.

The extension would make more sense for Mesa and Queen Creek, Kramer said, because the freeway eventually will link up to U.S. 60 more than 10 miles to the east in Pinal County.

"It's not an us vs. them. It's an us-with-them to provide a transportation system that will benefit everyone," said Wayne Balmer, Mesa's project manager for the Williams Gateway area.





Queen Creek will continue to state its case before MAG committees.

"I think there's still a long way to go to . . . the final outcome," said Queen Creek Mayor Wendy Feldman-Kerr, who sits on the MAG Regional Council.

"So, we still have some time."

B.7 ADOT rejects freeway idea for Hunt Highway corridor

Mike Walbert The Arizona Republic Jul. 25, 2005 12:00 AM

CHANDLER - The Arizona Department of Transportation says a freeway near Hunt Highway's corridor would not improve regional traffic flow, especially in congested areas such as Queen Creek, southeast Gilbert and southeast Chandler.

The finding, included in ADOT's Pinal County Corridors Definition Study, provides a sense of relief for many residents who live along the rural corridor and have expressed worries about a potential freeway damaging their quality of life.

"We're happy there won't be a freeway," Bonnie Almaraz said of her fellow neighbors in Chandler's Cooper Commons subdivision. The neighborhood lies right along Hunt Highway.

ADOT has been studying the potential for freeways in areas near Hunt Highway, Apache Junction, Coolidge, Eloy and Florence and presented its latest findings to the Chandler Transportation Commission last week.

"(Hunt Highway is) not a major arterial by any stretch," said Commissioner Frank Peake, who lives about a quarter-mile from Hunt Highway. "Some sections of that . . . are extraordinarily rural."

Peake also raised concerns about existing development and potentially high costs to acquire right-of-way.

"I just think about how many rooftops I see that would have to be mowed down to make way for a 300-foot (wide) swath," he said.

Without a freeway, the burden of solving traffic congestion falls upon Queen Creek, Gilbert and Chandler to continue improvements on their street systems, said Dianne Kresich, ADOT regional planner.

Queen Creek met ADOT's findings with acceptance.

"We've always communicated that (Hunt Highway would) be the wrong location for a freeway," said John Kross, Queen Creek assistant town manager.

Instead, the town has focused on Riggs Road becoming the major east-west travel corridor, Kross said. The town's General Plan calls for widening Riggs Road to six lanes to carry about 65,000 vehicles a day and serve as a direct route to Interstate 10, Kross said.





B.8 ADOT to discuss plans at open house

Florence Reminder August 4, 2005

Tentative plans for new highways in Pinal County and the East Valley will be presented at an open house hosted by the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), 5:30-7:30 p.m. Aug. 30 at Florence Town Hall.

The public is invited to see ADOT's findings, and offer written or verbal comments. There will be a presentation at 6 p.m.

ADOT has three "Corridor definition studies" – in Pinal County, the Williams Gateway area and U.S. 60, and each affects the others. "The studies have worked together closely from the beginning and now have merged," according to Dianne Kresich, a senior planner with ADOT.

Of particular interest to Florence, the planners are seeing a need for an "Apache Junction – Coolidge corridor" extending from Loop 202 in the East Valley to the Florence-Coolidge area, connecting to either Arizona 79 or Arizona 287.

The corridor definition studies will not recommend a road for which a need is not established, recommend a road that is not feasible to build, determine an exact alignment for a road or design any aspect of a road.

B.9 ADOT to hold open houses: U.S. 60 bypass to be discussed

Christina Fuoco Independent Newspapers August 15, 2005

The Arizona Department of Transportation is holding a series of local meetings to discuss potential new roadways in the East Valley and Pinal County.

From 5:30-7:30 p.m. Monday, Aug. 22, ADOT will discuss, among other projects, the U.S. Highway 60 Corridor Definition Studies, in the Apache Junction Council Chambers, 300 E. Superstition Blvd.

The existing U.S. Highway 60 is an east-to-west freeway that becomes a four-lane divided highway east of the Mountain View Road exit. The new road, dubbed the U.S. Highway 60 bypass, could run for approximately seven miles from south of Mountain View Road to Peralta Road, said Matt Burdick, ADOT spokesman.

"This is a follow-up meeting. We had previous public meetings that were held in late spring, early summer of this year in Pinal County and southeast Maricopa County to talk about a planning study that was required to look at new possible state highway corridors in southeast Maricopa County and northern Pinal County," Mr. Burdick said.

"This is a follow-up to report back to the public and get additional feedback from the analysis that we've done so far," he added.

The plan will go to the state transportation board in November, Mr. Burdick said. Other than that, there is no firm timeline.

"We will have to define, from a funding standpoint, the dollars for this project. We don't have a definite time frame. This is the first step in the case of Gold Canyon looking specifically at the request for possible realignment of the U.S. Highway 60 corridor," Mr. Burdick said.





"The first step is for the study to be completed and the transportation board to act and say, 'Yes indeed, we should look to realign U.S. Highway 60.' Then we'll begin the next stage of environment studies and looking at what the impacts might be. There are a number of environmental and engineering studies that would occur if the board recommends that we should do this."

Mr. Burdick explained that the U.S. 60 bypass is not a sure thing.

"There is also a need for some improvement or possible realignment of U.S. Highway 60 out near the Gold Canyon area. I say 'possible' because this is a study and obviously we're going to get input from the public," Mr. Burdick said.

"This study will go in front of the transportation board for them to recommend that new routes be brought into the state highway system or not."

Officials will also offer presentations about the Pinal County Corridors Definition Study which consists of two parts - the East Valley and the Apache Junction/Coolidge corridors, said Doug Nintzel, ADOT spokesman.

The East Valley Corridor, from Interstate 10 to Florence Junction, could parallel or overlap Hunt Highway along the southern boundary of Maricopa County, and extend from Interstate 10 to U.S. Highway 60 in Pinal County, Mr. Burdick said.

The Apache Junction/Coolidge Corridor begins at Interstate 10 south of Coolidge and could follow State Route 87 north to U.S. Highway 60. A future north-south roadway could be approximately 36 miles, Mr. Nintzel explained.

Mr. Burdick said so far the population projection and growth shows a possible need for a corridor running from Florence to the Queen Creek/Apache Junction area.

Also on the docket Aug. 22 is the Williams Gateway Corridor Definition Study, which could potentially run west-to-east beginning at Loop 202 in Maricopa County, through the vicinity of the General Motor Proving Grounds and the Williams Gateway Airport, terminating at U.S. Highway 60 in Pinal County. The roadway would be approximately 15 miles.

For more information about the studies, visit http://tpd.azdot.gov/planning/corridorstudies.php

"The presentation is an update based on the population projections, the analysis of different types of facilities and how they might function given the growth. The discussions are based on that analysis and what we think would be viable state highway corridors and which ones wouldn't make sense for a state highway and would be better accommodated by a local street network or other facility. That's really what the discussion will focus on," Mr. Burdick said.

"It's a good opportunity for people to get an update since our previous meetings. Some may like the concept, some may not. That's the whole intent - whether they like the idea or whether they don't."

B.10 U.S. 60 reroute may be years off

Aug. 18, 2005 Arizona Republic, Mesa Edition

An Arizona Department of Transportation study of the U.S. 60 corridor in the Gold Canyon area has concluded that future travel demands justify the rerouting of the highway. But it won't happen soon.





Participants in a focus group discussion Aug. 10 at the Gold Canyon Best Western were told that a needs analysis of the corridor concluded that the highway should be rerouted from the current end of the Superstition Freeway at milepost 199 in Apache Junction to milepost 205 near the Renaissance Festival site.

The study also looked into the option of continuing the rerouting to the junction of U.S. 60 and Arizona 79 at Florence Junction, but concluded that limited access highway from milepost 205 to milepost 212 at Florence Junction would be a better answer.

The seven-mile rerouting was part of the ADOT draft corridor concept, which recommends that the future Williams Gateway corridor run southeast to the Coolidge-Florence area instead of linking up with U.S. 60 at Florence Junction as originally envisioned.

The study identified several strategies that needed to be implemented for all corridors:

B.11 Pinal fears future gridlock, County, East Valley leaders find freeway study lacking

By Garin Groff East Valley Tribune August 20, 2005

In 2030, Pinal County will have as many people as the East Valley does today. And while the East Valley's roughly 1 million residents have multiple freeways to get them around, Arizona officials are looking at just two new freeways for northern Pinal County.

Some East Valley and Pinal county leaders say that doesn't add up.

If tiny Queen Creek is already congested, they ask, what happens when another 800,000 residents live between there and Coolidge? And because northern Pinal county will still have plenty of land to build on, how much worse will things get in a couple more decades when Pinal County is fully developed?

Roc Arnett of the East Valley Partnership fears current planning efforts will doom Pinal county to gridlock.

"It's not enough," Arnett said.

His concern is shared by others in the county – and by the top transportation planner in Maricopa County.

"They say a study under way by the Arizona Department of Transportation is flawed. They are pressing state planners to rethink their work.

ADOT planners acknowledge Pinal County may need more freeways than they're planning, albeit decades from now. But it's too early to plan that far ahead because so many things could change in the next quarter-century, said Dianne Kresich, a regional planner at ADOT.

"Even when this study is finished, there will be other studies that are likely to look at these corridors," Kresich said. "So this is not necessarily the final word."

ADOT plans to finish its study and formally adopt a transportation plan by year's end. The disagreement involves a transportation plan for Pinal county that dates to 2003. That plan wasn't meant to be the ultimate vision on the issue, but it suggested the area will need five regional highways





or freeways. The \$500,000 study involved ADOT, the Maricopa Association of Governments and the Central Arizona Association of Governments.

Now, ADOT is doing its own version of the study. It's still in progress, but so far it's outlined the demand for two freeways and a parkway.

One would extend U.S. 60 as a freeway from Apache Junction through Gold Canyon. Another would run from about Coolidge to an already planned freeway a few miles from east of Williams Gateway Airport. A parkway would run roughly along Ironwood Drive, south of U.S. 60 to the future Williams Gateway Freeway.

ADOT didn't see a need for the three other potential highways in the 2003 study – not at least by 2030. However, ADOT did leave room for cities and Pinal County to set aside land by major roads. That would allow highways or freeways to go in decades from now if needed.

The criticism of ADOT's planning is normal, Kresich said, but not strong.

Critics say ADOT must look further ahead given Arizona's history of explosive growth since World War II. Pinal County should expect rapid growth after 2030, meaning it will need more freeways than ADOT is planning now, said Eric Anderson, the transportation director for the Maricopa Association of Governments.

"What we've learned in Maricopa County is it seems we're always growing faster than people think, Anderson said. "How can we apply those lessons to Pinal County? It seems we ought to be looking a little more 'big picture.'

The routes suggested in the 2003 study would better serve the area, he said.

Anderson also said the Williams Gateway Freeway will need to go farther east than the ADOT study calls for. ADOT recommends building it from the Santan Freeway leg of Loop 202 to a north-south freeway near Ironwood Drive. It should continue east to U.S. 60, Anderson said, because it will serve an area nears as populous as the East Valley.

"We would think that eventually it's going to want to go out to U.S. 60, so we ought to plan for that, rather than say, "We'll take it this far and somebody else needs to worry about it," Anderson said. Anderson and Arnett called for ADOT's study to consider the needs of 2050, when most of northern Pinal County will fill up.

"Let's at least give our grandchildren a chance of having transportation infrastructure in place," Arnett said.

B.12 Pinal County blasts ADOT road plans, Study underestimates growth, needs, leaders say

Carl Holcombe The Arizona Republic Aug. 22, 2005

Pinal County leaders claim that a state transportation study underestimates the area's explosive growth and ignores a dire need for future freeways, highways and expanded roads.





The Arizona Department of Transportation is in the midst of studying the transportation needs along major corridors in the East Valley and Pinal County. The study will affect state, county and city transportation planning through 2030.

The need for future freeways is being determined based on population and traffic predictions.

Pinal County Supervisor David Snider called ADOT's population figures "woefully inadequate." And he is upset that the city of Maricopa, one of the fastest-growing communities in the nation, is not included in the study.

"Quite frankly, the west side has been ignored," Snider said. "It's growing just as fast as the Johnson Ranch and San Tan area, and it deserves to be looked at."

ADOT project manager Dianne Kresich said the state Legislature determined the study area, which runs through central Pinal County and the south portion of the East Valley.

That doesn't make Maricopa resident Matthew Jamieson, a beverage distributor who travels the state, feel better.

"Everybody talks about Queen Creek, but we're in even worse shape," Jamieson said. "We have all of these one-lane roads. When there are floods or crashes, we have to drive 50 miles out of our way to get home. . . . People continue to discount our (population growth) numbers."

The ADOT study is examining whether six-lane freeways, highways or other road expansions are needed: to link Interstate 10 through Pinal County to the Superstition Freeway; to link I-10 through south Chandler to the Superstition Freeway; to link Loop 202 in Mesa to U.S. 60 south of Gold Canyon; or to detour U.S. 60 around Gold Canyon.

After months of public meetings and study, Kresich said population figures don't support potential freeways linking Florence to Coolidge and Eloy, or connecting I-10 and U.S. 60.

ADOT officials have based their population projections on a year-old Central Arizona College study that predicted Pinal County would have nearly 1 million residents by 2025. But local officials predict Queen Creek, the San Tan area and Florence alone will top 1 million before that.

"We expect 100,000 people in Maricopa in five to seven years," said Maricopa City Council member EdwardFerrell.

Pinal County and the south area of the East Valley are already experiencing traffic congestion.

Arizona 347, which connects Maricopa to I-10, handles about 50,000 vehicles a day, Snider said. Maricopa commuters are already bogging down traffic along I-10 at Ahwatukee Foothills during rush hour, and the city expects to add 20,000 new residents each year.

Snider said the Casa Grande-Maricopa Highway and other roads around those cities also already have heavy traffic.

"We're falling further and further behind," Snider said.

Queen Creek Town Council member Gail Barney agreed, saying traffic planning in the area is already behind the curve. "I'm glad we're doing this, but I wish this would've happened 10 years ago," Barney





said.

Pinal County Supervisor Sandie Smith said it is important to determine future freeway routes now to prevent homes from being built and affected by later decisions.

According to ADOT documents, preliminary study results show a need for the U.S. 60 detour around Gold Canyon, and expanded transportation options from Loop 202 in Mesa south through Pinal County nearly to Florence.

East Valley and Pinal County residents have supported ADOT's decision not to link I-10 and the Superstition Freeway via Hunt Highway, which is lined with residential development. Smith agreed, saying that route wouldn't solve the current congestion problems.

ADOT has scheduled additional public hearings to gather resident input.

"The input will help us develop final recommendations," Kresich said. "We're looking for need. Is it feasible to build in a corridor?"

ADOT will make its final recommendation to the Arizona State Transportation Board in November. The board will determine the next step, but motorists shouldn't expect exact routes for years and construction for at least a decade

B.13 Studies indicate need for 2 new Pinal roads, State urged to move quickly to meet explosion of growth

Staff Reports Florence Reminder September 8, 2005

State transportation officials at an open house in Florence were urged to plan for all the potential highways cited in their studies of Pinal County and the East Valley, and reserve the right-of-way as soon as possible.

At this time, the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) sees a need for just two - a new road connecting the Florence-Coolidge area to Loop 202, and a reroute of U.S. 60 around Gold Canyon.

This was the conclusion of ADOT's "Corridor Definition Studies" of this area with local advisors and a consultant, ADOT representatives said at the Aug. 30 open house at Florence Town Hall.

The studies indicate these roads will be needed by 2030, but if and when they will actually be built is unknown. "No funds for further study or construction in Pinal County have been identified," Dianne Kresich, ADOT project manager, told those in attendance.

Two other routes considered, but not supported by the studies, are a six-lane freeway between I-10 and Florence Junction, and a highway coming off Arizona 287 and extending south to the Eloy area. Expected travel demands don't justify these roads before 2030, Kresich said.

She said Queen Creek and Gilbert are "still at work developing a mature arterial system" and a freeway between I-10 and Florence Junction won't be enough to solve their problems.

ADOT will review public input from this open house and earlier open houses in other communities. It will then complete a working paper for those who have provided technical advice to the studies. The





goal will then be to have a final draft report of the study recommendations to present to the State Transportation Board in November, according to Andrew G. Smith, ADOT senior transportation planner.

Actual alignment of any roads will be determined by future studies, ADOT spokesmen said. The corridor definition studies will not determine an exact alignment for a road or design any aspect of a road.

With the average cost of a freeway mile being \$42 million in the Phoenix area, a reroute around Gold Canyon and a new road from Loop 202 to Florence could mean \$1.4 billion worth of new highway construction in Pinal County, Kresich said.

Public comments

Mesa Mayor Keno Hawker urged ADOT representatives to continue planning for all four alignments "and not preclude any." He further said he believed ADOT's population projections to be off.

Harrison Merrill, head of the family trust that owns the future Merrill Ranch housing community east of Anthem in Florence, asked how ADOT will protect its right-of-way for these roads. "You can talk about 2030 all you want," Merrill said, but without the right-of-way, plan on triple the price.

Kresich said as a state agency, ADOT doesn't have the zoning authority that local governments do, "so we need to work with our local agencies."

Hawker suggested ADOT should also work with the State Land Department.

"You have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work with State Land and do transportation and land use planning together ... and not have them conflict," Hawker said. He asked why state trust land couldn't be "set aside" for the freeways.

"State Land has the last say on it, end of story," Florence Mayor Tom Rankin said. "Common sense tells you you build it where there isn't anything, and let growth build up around it." Rankin also agreed with Hawker that "your population projections aren't accurate."

ADOT projects 1,073,000 people in the area stretching from Apache Junction to Eloy and Maricopa to Superior by 2030. Kresich said the numbers came from Central Arizona College's bond feasibility study, and "were recommended by Pinal County because they were the most accurate published numbers available."

Smith also defended ADOT's population figures.

"The numbers other people throw out are 'build-out' numbers ... what could someday happen if everything developed as an urban area." He added it's "a very open question how soon state land will go out to bid."

Merrill suggested a toll could speed up the process. He said toll roads have "worked remarkable well" in Atlanta, "to move the road up by a decade and a decade and a half.

"The opportunity is right now," Merrill said. "In 2020, you won't be able to afford to buy your right-of-way."





Further studies will include the feasibility of toll roads, and "any further steps will be determined by our state transportation board," Kresich said.

The Pinal County study area includes Apache Junction, Queen Creek, Maricopa, Casa Grande, Coolidge, Florence and Eloy. These communities have done, are doing, or will soon begin their own "Small Area Transportation Studies" of their transportation needs, 80 percent funded by ADOT.

As ADOT looks at new highways, widening of existing state highways to four lanes in the study area is also possible, ADOT spokesmen said. Widening the ones with most traffic volume by 2030 could cost \$600 million. Widening them all could cost \$900 million.

B.14 Debate over Pinal County's growth rate hinders plans

Carl Holcombe The Arizona Republic Sept. 13, 2005

New homes are going up everywhere in central and western Pinal County, bringing new residents, more traffic congestion and greater demand for public infrastructure.

But state and local officials' seeming inability to agree on how many people are coming, or how fast the county's population will grow, is making it increasingly difficult to plan for things such as regional transportation needs.

Growth predictions by municipalities, the University of Arizona, the Maricopa Association of Governments, Central Arizona College and others vary widely. The Arizona Department of Transportation is predicting 1.1 million residents by 2030. A new landowner-funded report by Elliott D. Pollack & Co. suggests 2.2 million people will live in Pinal County 25 years from now. advertisement

Pinal County officials have been calling ADOT's numbers too low for months and now say the Pollack study confirms it.

"(ADOT) has been working on generally accepted growth numbers, and we're here to say things are different," said Pinal County Supervisor Sandie Smith. "We will send them the (new) numbers."

ADOT is currently examining which areas of the East Valley and Pinal County will need expanded roads, new highways or new freeways through 2030.

Based on ADOT's population projections, its staff is currently advising that a freeway extending south all the way through the growth areas of Florence and Coolidge and then west to Interstate 10 is not warranted. And its study didn't look at regional transportation needs in Maricopa, one of the nation's fastest-growing cities.

The Pollack report indicates ADOT's numbers don't adequately reflect that southeast Maricopa County's surging housing prices and dwindling land supply will fuel Pinal County growth. It alleged that the current state of freeway construction and congestion can be linked to ADOT's low population predictions 20 years ago for Gilbert, Surprise and Goodyear.

But Pollack admitted his numbers may not be accurate. He warned that projections over decades leave room for change over the years.





"That's just a ballpark figure. A lot can happen in 25 years," Pollack said. "It's better to anticipate more than less."

ADOT project manager Dianne Kresich said the state is too far along in its study to switch over to Pollack's numbers.

The impact of inaccurate population predictions could cause a domino effect in terms of providing new residents with other services as well, Pinal County leaders say.

Freeway locations will play a major role in guiding residential, retail and industrial growth as Pinal County continues to grow toward the Valley and Tucson.

Westcor has already committed land to a mall in Coolidge where a freeway that ADOT is not even yet recommending may one day go.

Florence Mayor Tom Rankin is concerned about the future route of that same phantom freeway, and the impacts of it possibly running right through the middle of his town's retail and residential future.





APPENDIX C – PRESENTATION MATERIALS



FACT SHEET

CORRIDOR DEFINITION STUDIES



The **Arizona Department of Transportation** is currently conducting three corridor definition studies to assess the need for and feasibility of potential new facilities in the study area shown to the left:

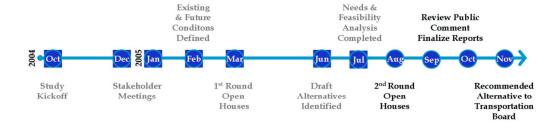
- · Pinal County Corridors Definition Study
 - The East Valley Corridor (I-10 to Florence Junction)
 - The Apache Junction/Coolidge Corridor (I-10 to US 60)
- US 60 Corridor Definition Study (From the end of the Superstition Freeway to Florence Junction)
- Williams Gateway Corridor Definition Study (From Loop 202 to US 60)

Purpose of Studies

The purpose of the studies is to make recommendations on the general location of transportation corridors in the two-county study area, the types of future transportation facilities and the jurisdictional responsibility for the facilities. For areas where new corridors are needed, determinations will also be made as to the feasibility of construction in that area given the existing physical, environmental and community constraints. The corridor studies will not address detailed issues such as exact alignments or design for any roadways.

Progress

The three studies were initiated in the fall of 2004. An inventory of existing and future conditions was developed and a first round of public participation meetings was held in the spring of 2005. Regular meetings were also held with the Technical Advisory Committees. The needs and feasibility analyses for the corridors were recently conducted. This information is presented at today's open house.







Recommended Corridors

As a result of study participants' input and the analysis of future travel needs, a need was identified for approximately 50 miles of new corridor:

- A reroute of US 60 in the Gold Canyon area; and
- A Williams Gateway to North-South corridor that connects Loop 202 in Maricopa County to either SR 79 or SR 287 in Pinal County.

Key Findings of Needs Analysis

The needs analysis yielded system-level strategies to support planning for new corridors:

- New corridors cannot function without arterial development in Pinal County
- Widening and access management (control of intersection spacing and driveway access) on all state highways is key as the counties grow
- Right-of-way protection by zoning authorities is recommended for future corridors
- · Continued coordination between ADOT and local jurisdictions is essential for development of the system

Feasibility Analysis

Feasibility analyses have also been conducted for each of the studies, focused on fatal flaws and other concerns that may impact implementation:

- There are acceptable locations for construction of new facilities
- Connections between new corridors and existing roadways need to be determined
- Drainage studies and environmental mitigation will be required
- Integration with local development is needed
- Developing new freeways would likely cost \$2 billion

Williams Gateway Preliminary Corridor North-South Preliminary Corridor Preliminary Corridor

Next Steps

- Public input on the needs and feasibility analysis received at the open houses will be reviewed
- Feasibility analysis of selected corridors will be completed
- Recommended corridor definitions will be developed
- Final study reports will be produced
- Findings will be presented to the State Transportation Board in November 2005

Contact Information

Please visit our web site: http://tpd.azdot.gov/planning/corridorstudies.php

Dianne Kresich Andy Smith

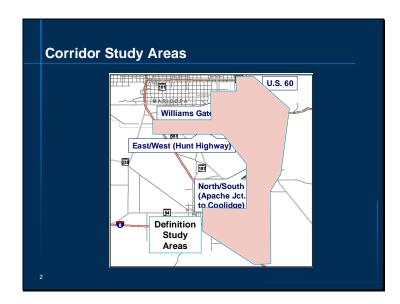
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Overview Purpose A fresh look at corridors identified in SEMNPTS Are any new corridors needed? Are they feasible for construction? If needed and feasible, should they be state facilities? A Corridor Definition Study is not intended to: Recommend a road for which need is not established Recommend a road that is not feasible to build Determine an exact alignment for the road Design any aspect of the road





Overview Coordination

- Extensive coordination between three study teams
- All three studies managed and coordinated by ADOT
 - Each study guided by Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
 - TACs comprised of representatives from local, state, and federal, and tribal agencies
- Public Participation
 - Public Open Houses
 - Stakeholder / Focus Meetings
 - Consultation with rural elected officials

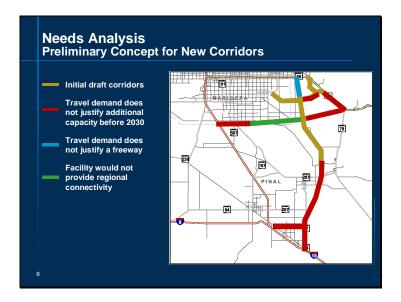
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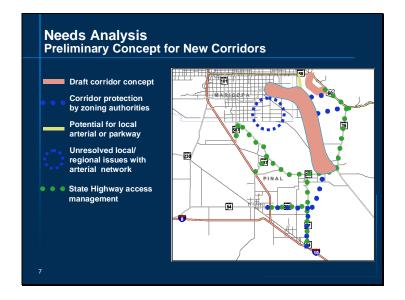
Needs Analysis

- Pinal County Planning Model (PCPM) established:
 - One study area for all three studies
 - Combines information from MAG, Pinal County, and local jurisdictions
 - Forecast population, employment, and traffic to 2030
- Several Corridor Concepts tested
- Preliminary Recommendations
 - New Corridor concept
 - + 4 to 6 lane local arterial network
 - + 4 lane state highway system in certain areas













Feasibility Analysis Feasibility Components

- Purpose
 - Identify pros and cons of corridor options
 - Identify fatal flaws, if any
 - Define corridors to the extent possible
- Feasibility Components
 - Engineering
 - Environmental compliance
 - Socioeconomic and land use
 - Community concerns
 - Cost and right-of-way
- 8

Initial Feasibility Findings Engineering Feasibility

- Corridors cross undeveloped State Trust land
- Acceptable locations for construction exist
 - Fissures not located within corridors
- Connections between corridors, and to existing highways, not yet determined
- Crossing of the CAP canal could present engineering and environmental challenges





Initial Feasibility Findings Environmental Compliance

- Drainage studies are required to identify the specific location of possible future roads
- Mitigation will likely be required for environmental concerns (drainage, species, archeological sites, recreation, etc.)

Socioeconomic and Land Use

Coordination needed with local governments and private developers

10

Initial Feasibility Findings Community Concerns

- Support from Pinal County and local jurisdictions for US 60 re-route and N – S corridor
- Support from Pinal County and Apache Junction for N – S parkway south of US 60
- Opposition from local residents to any improvements to or near Hunt Highway





Preliminary Recommendations

- Two new corridors may be recommended to the State Transportation Board to be designated as state routes:
 - US 60 reroute
 - North South corridor between Loop 202 and SR 79 / SR 287 area

12

Cost Issues

- Approximately 50 miles of new corridors may be recommended
 - Average cost of Phoenix area freeway centerline mile: \$42,000,000 (ROW + construction)
 - Estimated cost of new facilities > \$ 2 B
- Upgrade of existing state routes to four lane access controlled facilities
 - Estimated cost of widening to meet 2030 needs > \$600 M
 - Estimated cost of widening in entire study area > \$900 M
- No funds for further study or construction have been identified





Next Steps

- Planning studies
 - Local long-range multi-modal planning: ADOT + regional planning agencies + local jurisdictions
 - Access management
 - Regional Profiles State Highway System
 - Detailed financial analysis
 - ? Bonding
 - ? Tolls
 - ? Other
- Engineering / Environmental studies
- Right-of-way protection

Considerations

- Future of State Trust land is key to development in study areas
 - Long-range land use planning by State Land Department and local jurisdictions
- Development of transportation network depends on partnerships between state, regional, local governments, and private sector





APPENDIX D - SAMPLE COMMENT CARD

ADD I	
Villiams Gateway Corridor Definition Study JS 60 Corridor Definition Study Pinal County Corridors Definition Study	
JS 60 Corridor Definition Study	
rinal County Corridors Definition Study	
Ve welcome your comments:	
For more information, visit our website: http://tpd.azdot.gov/planning/corridorstudies.php	





APPENDIX E – CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

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Webb Crockett, Fennemore Craig, PC

Gerry Fathauer, Mesa Arts Center

Joanie Flatt, Flatt & Assoc., Ltd.

John Fry, TRW Vehicle Safety Systems Pam Goronkin, City of Tempe

Pam Goronkin, City of Tempe Anne Hamilton, HighGround, Inc.

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David Krietor, City of Phoenix Aviation

Barry Landon, Southwest Ambulance

Milton V. Lee, Nepenthe Corporation Larry LeSueur, America West Airlines

Albert McHenry, Arizona State University Vince Murphy, Waste Management

Garrett Newland, City of Chandler

David Olney, Intel Corporation

Mike O'Neil, O'Neil Associates, Inc.

Jim Patterson, Arriba Development

Virgil Renzulli, Arizona State University Bernie Ronan, MCC Center for Public Policy

Roz Santangelo, Southwest Airlines Gerry Smith, East Valley Community Bank

Greg Stanton, City of Phoenix

Adam Turner, Arizona Cardinals

Chuck Wahlheim, WCB Enterprises

Mike Whalen, City of Mesa

Karen Wittmer, East Valley Tribune

EX OFFICIO DIRECTORS

Fulton Brock, Maricopa County BOS Sandie Smith, Pinal County BOS Don Stapley, Maricopa County BOS



June 2, 2005

Mr. Victor Mendez Director Arizona Department of Transportation 206 S. 17th Ave., Mail Drop 100A Phoenix, AZ 85007

Subject: Northern Pinal County Corridors Definition Studies

Dear Victor:

After considerable discussion, the East Valley Partnership has formally passed a resolution in support of the Northern Pinal County Corridors Definition Studies. The position reads:

Transportation Position
Approved by the EVP Board of directors on May 5, 2005

Northern Pinal County Corridors Definition Studies

The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) is examining the need for and feasibility of future transportation corridors in Northern Pinal County. This process is consistent with the MAG/CAAG S/E Maricopa/Northern Pinal County Study of September 2003 and was directed by the Legislature. The four corridors currently under study are:

- US 60 Extension/Bypass southeast of Apache Junction toward Florence Junction.
- Williams Gateway Freeway from the alignment to be established in Maricopa County east to the Gold Canyon Area.
- Hunt Highway Alignment East Valley Study Area which could connect I-10 on the west and US 60 near Florence Junction on the east.
- Apache Junction/Coolidge study area connecting I-10 near Casa Grande or Eloy on the south and US 60 in Apache Junction.

As the process moves toward decisions scheduled for November 2005, the East Valley Partnership endorses the process and believes that freeway level facilities are necessary in all four corridors. During the next 20 years, in order to serve adequately the fast-growing population in the area, the State and others must preserve and build facilities in these corridors while also exploring additional facilities and services in other corridors. The need for these corridors as designated State routes is great and will only increase.

POSITION: The East Valley Partnership supports the corridor definition process and the position that freeway level facilities are necessary in all four of these corridors.

1343 North Tech Boulevard • Suite 102 • Gilbert, Arizona 85233 • Tel: 480.834.8335 • www.evp-az.org





Mr. Victor Mendez June 2, 2005 Page Two

The East Valley Partnership believes that the establishment of these four corridors is good public policy and is essential for the future growth of the region.

Sincerely,

F. Rockne Arnett

President